



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Explaining mortality statistics from yellow fever in Havana.

LOUISVILLE, KY., October 8, 1900.

SIR: I would respectfully invite attention to a statement in the PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS of September 28, from which, if not understood, a false impression might be drawn.

In the report of the chief sanitary officer of Havana, page 2405, the following is given for the yellow fever mortality for August, for the last ten years: 1890, deaths, 60; 1891, deaths, 66; 1892, deaths, 67; 1893, deaths, 100; 1894, deaths, 73; 1895, deaths, 125; 1896, deaths, 262; 1897, deaths, 102; 1898, deaths, 16; 1899, deaths, 13; 1900, deaths, 49.

This is doubtless correct and shows a decidedly less number of deaths from yellow fever for the August of 1900 than the average for the years tabulated; the low mortality in 1898 and 1899 being correctly explained by the diminution of immigration—*i. e.*, of susceptible material, during those years.

In comparing the yellow fever mortality of Havana for the same periods of different years, for the purpose of determining the changes in the prevalence of that disease, it, to the writer, seems essential to take only the mortality of the same classes of people, unless the mortality of different classes run parallel to each other. Especially does this seem necessary if any considerable change has taken place in the conditions (affecting the mortality) of one class which is not general to all.

The statistics quoted above include the mortality of the Spanish garrison (in the military hospitals), which furnish, for reasons unnecessary to elaborate, a considerable proportion of the total mortality—from 18 per cent to 92 per cent of the above list—to which it bore no definite relation. There is now no garrison in Havana, and the Americans connected with the military government who live in Havana, and who fairly may be taken in place of it, furnish but a small quota of deaths from yellow fever, one this year up to July 25.

A comparison, then, of the yellow fever mortality between different periods, some of which include the considerable mortality of the Spanish garrison and the other the small mortality of its American substitute, may well give us, if we do not note this factor, an erroneous idea of the present prevalence of yellow fever in Havana as compared with the normal. Especially is this true if the period of the war—1895 to 1898—be taken in, during eighteen months of which—in 1896 and 1897—208,000 new troops were landed there from Spain.

For the above reasons, it seems instructive to make the comparison using the yellow fever mortality among the civil population alone. This gives for the month of August: 1890, deaths, 28; 1891, deaths, 23; 1892, deaths, 52; 1893, deaths, 82; 1894, deaths, 21; 1895, deaths, 85; 1896, deaths, 37; 1897, deaths, 9; 1898, deaths, 5; 1899, deaths, 8; 1900, deaths, —. For August, 1900, I do not know the number of civilian deaths, but as only 8 Americans all told appear in it, the chance is that less than this number were military employees, so that the civilian deaths for last August should be not less than 4, probably more.

The average civilian mortality for August in the ten years preceeding the war (1885 to 1894) is 36.6.

Unquestionably, as Major Gorgas implies, the Spanish immigration—*i. e.*, number of people susceptible to yellow fever, is a prime factor in the yellow fever mortality of Havana, indeed, judging by the past history of Havana, the prime factor.

Respectfully,

H. R. CARTER,

Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

The SURGEON GENERAL, U. S. Marine-Hospital Service.